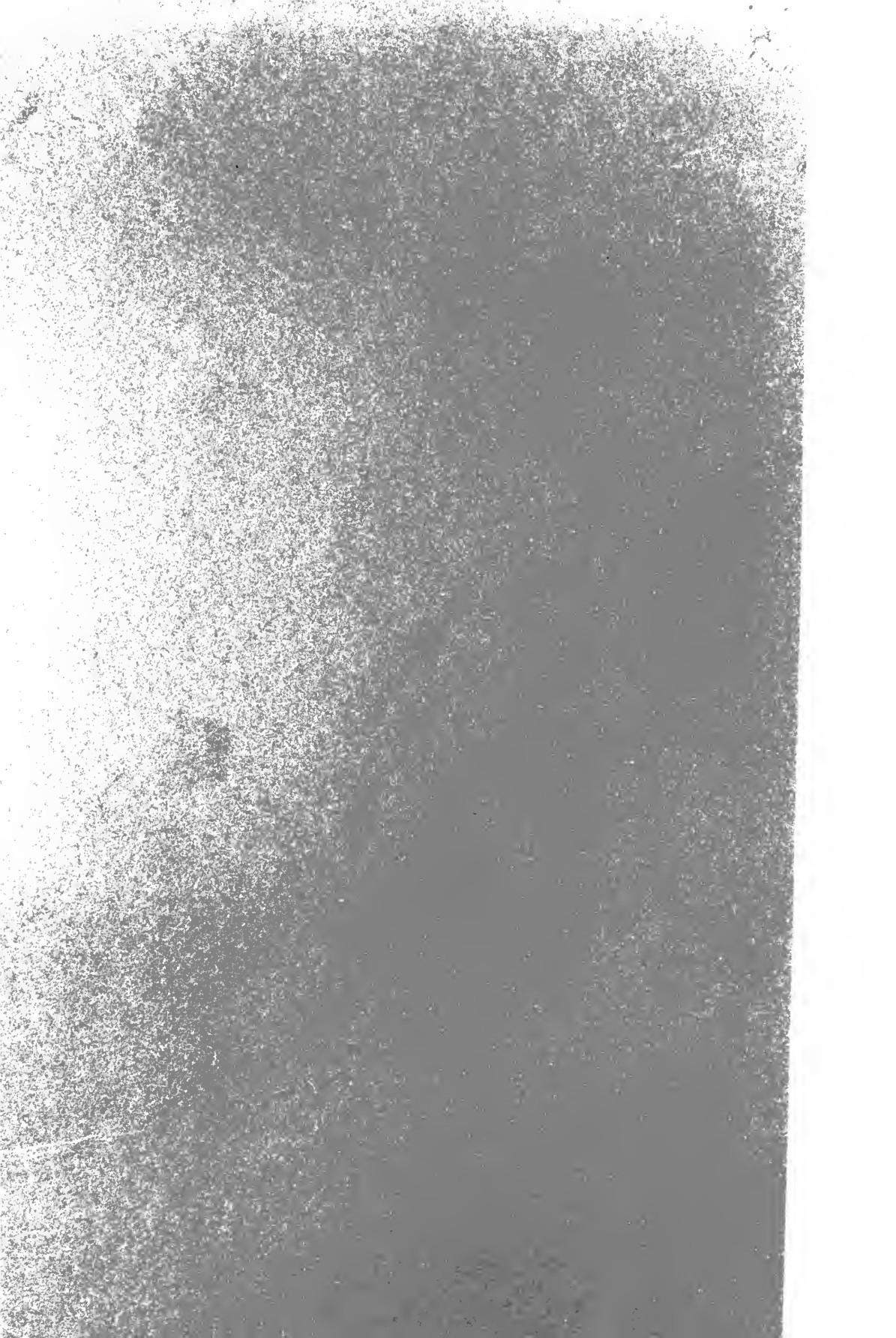


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An ESSAY on
MORAL OBLIGATION:
With a View
Towards settling the Controversy,
Concerning
Moral and *Positive Duties.*

In Answer
To two late Pamphlets;

The one entitled; *The true Foundation of natural and revealed Religion asserted; Being a Reply to the Supplement to the Treatise on the Christian Sacraments.*

The other—*Some Reflections upon the Comparative Excellency and Usefulness of Moral and Positive Duties:* by Mr. C H U B B.

LONDON:

Printed by J. S. for W. Thurlow, Bookseller in Cambridge,
and sold by J. and J. Knott in St. Paul's Church-Yard; and
J. Sauer, at the Bell, near Temple-Bar, London. 1731.

(Price One Shilling)



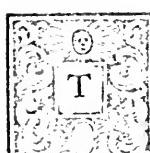
The Author's distance from the Press has occasioned the following Mistakes.

PAG. 2. l. 1, 2. for settling on read setting in.
P. 37. l. 3. for ebbe r. ebb. P. 40. l. 21.
for this r. *Tens*. Ibid. l. 26. for quorsus r. prorsus.
Ibid. l. 27. for *Tonis* r. *Bonis*. P. 52. l. 16. for
casual r. carel. P. 56. l. 20. for upon r. without.
P. 60. l. 26. for confit r. constat. P. 70. l. 5. for
Peason r. *Season*.



A N
E S S A Y,
O N
Moral Obligation.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

 H E late Controversy concerning the Nature and Obligation of *moral* and *positive Duties* has run out into so great a Length, that it may perhaps be thought superfluous to add any thing to what has been already said; I shall only offer, by way of Apology for troubling the World with my Sentiments of the Matter, that the Difference between the respective Parties at present being about the very Foundation and first Principles of Morality, I thought it behoved every one, who had any Concern for Religion, to contribute his best

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best Endeavours towards settling that important Subject on a true and clear Light. And as it has been abundantly proved by Mr. *Locke*, and others, (*a*) that the Certainty of *Moral Science* is capable of being as firmly established, and as clearly demonstrated, as any *Speculative Science* whatever, 'tis manifest that this Difference of Opinion, concerning what each Side thinks *first Principles*, must be owing to the Prejudices and Prepossessions of one Side at least: and therefore, the only way to find out where the Error lies, seems to be, to begin all a-new, to strip ourselves of all pre-conceiv'd Notions, to consider over again the Nature and Essence of *Moral Obligation*, and to enquire who are the proper Subjects of it: and in the Course of the Enquiry, to examine the different Schemes that have been propos'd, in order to determine which is the true one.

This is what I shall endeavour in these Papers, with that Freedom and Impartiality which becomes a Lover of Truth; having no other Intention than to distinguish Truth from Error, to fix Morality upon its right Foundation, and to give some Light into the Subject, to those who in this Controversy have as yet wandred in Darknes.

(*a*) See his Essay on Hum. Und. B. 4. Ch. 11. §. 16. *Pufendorf's Law of Nat.* B. 1. C. 2. §. 4. and *Babylas's Pref. Disc.* §. 2.

I shall

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I shall begin with enquiring into the Nature of *Obligation*; and what is the *Rule of Action* to Moral Agents.

C H A P. I.

Concerning Obligation, and the Rule of Action.

WHEN an Agent is look'd upon with a View to his moral Capacity, he is considered as endowed with *Free-will*, whereby he can chuse or refuse a thing proposed; and *Understanding*, whereby he can judge how he should make his Choice in any given Case. The *former* is necessary, because, unless it was in his Power to make wrong Elections, the contrary could have no Merit in them, nor be approveable or rewardable: and the *latter* is so, because otherwise, as the *Will* is a blind Principle, the Agent would have no Guide or Direction how to make his Choice. Now because *Moral Obligation* is supposed to bring such a *Necessity* upon an Agent, as is consistent with *perfect Liberty*, before it can be determined what can induce such an *Obligation*, it must first be known what it is he would chuse or refuse, as an *intelligent free Agent*. And as 'tis self-evident, that to every sensible Being Happiness is preferable to Misery, and

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consequently that Happiness must be his Choice, and Misery his Aversion; it follows, that *Moral Obligation* can be founded upon this Principle only, and must mean a *Necessity of Action arising from a Prospect of obtaining Happiness, or avoiding Misery.* (a)

What therefore is the Principal, or indeed *only Concern* of such a Being is, to study *means of his own Happiness*; and with regard to that (lest by acting at random he should bring Misery upon himself, instead of Happiness) 'tis necessary that he should have some consistent *Rule of Action*, that is, some *Law or Moral Rule* which he *ought* to act conformably to. And as a supposed Rule or Law, an Obedience to which can produce no Happiness to the Agent, nor Disobedience Misery, can bring *no Obligation* with it, and is in effect no Law: so 'tis evident, that *that* which is connected with the highest Degree of Happiness and Misery, will bring with it the *strongest Obligation*: Or thus, that Rule of Action, a Conformity to which will, upon all Considerations, procure the greatest *Sum total of Happiness* to the Agent, is what he is *obliged*, or

(a) *Aetio agenti rationali tum necessaria esse intelligitur, cum certum est eam contineri in causis necessariis requisitis ad felicitatem illam, quam naturaliter adeoq; necessaria expedit.* *Cumberland de Leg. Nat. C. V. 27. p. 241. Sec.* There is nothing but the Thoughts of that *Good* or *Evil*, which our Actions may bring on ourselves, that can lay any *Necessity* of such a Performance, or such an Omission, &c. *Puffendorf's Law of Nat. B. I C. 6. §. 5.*

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under a *moral Necessity* to observe. And *Moral Good* or *Evil* is only the Conformity or Disagreement of our Actions to this Rule.

It is next to be considered, what must be the *Rule of Action to a moral Agent.*

It is taken for granted (because admitted by all Parties whom I have any Concern with here) that God is the Author of Nature, and the Creator of the Universe, that all things depend upon his good Will and Pleasure, as for their Existence, so for their Continuance, and that from him only all their Happiness is derived. And farther, that Creatures which are endued with *Reason* and use it *rightly*, may know so much of his Intention and Design, as relates to them, and be able to discover what is usually call'd a *Law of Nature*. This they must be sensible is the Gift of God,* and that they are bound to the Observation of it by the Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments which are in his Hands; that 'tis Obedience to his *Will*, which can be the only Means of procuring his Favour and Approbation, and consequently of obtaining Happiness and avoiding Misery. Therefore 'tis his Will (however discover'd, whether by his *tacit Declaration* in the Creation of the World, or that more express one called *Revelation*) which is the adequate *Rule of the Practice of moral*

* Merito naturali legi convenit illud—quod sit impunitus & securus
per omnes. *Cartharina de Leg. Nat. C. 2. §. 9.*

Agents,

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Agents, and 'tis with that every Action must be compared, as the true Standard of Morality.

It may be said perhaps, that God may create us with such a Relation to our Fellow-Creatures, as that we shall partly depend upon them for our Happiness; and from thence it may be urg'd, that we must have other *Laws or Rules* to act by, for the measure of moral Obligation: But I answer, to give our Actions a moral Character, they must be referr'd to the *same Rule* still. Because, so far as we depend upon Creatures under God, we still depend *mediately* upon God, and those Creatures are only God's *Means or Instruments* to procure our Happiness or Misery. Which is so true, that if any Dependence one may have upon Creatures be not consider'd as subordinate to God, and referr'd up to him, it is no *Rule or Law* at all; but a Snare or a Temptation, which a Man ought not to yield or submit to. Actions done upon the low Views of procuring temporal Felicity, can have nothing of Morality in them, whatever they may have of worldly Prudence: for instance, to act with a View only to the Praise of Men, and to terminate the Thoughts there, is no *morally good Action*; but doing the same thing, and looking up higher to God, with a View to his Will, and his Glory may be *moral Virtue*. The Reason of all is this;

God's

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God's Will alone is a Rule adequate to all Cases; all other pretended Rules whatsoever being short, imperfect, and liable to Exception, and therefore no Rules.

I shall conclude this Chapter with the Words of the great Mr. *Locke*, which are full to my present Purpose.* "We are God's Creatures, he has Goodness and Wisdom to direct our Actions to that which is best; and he has Power to enforce it by Rewards and Punishments of infinite Weight and Duration in another Life. For no body can take us out of his Hands. This is the *only* true TOUCHSTONE of *Moral Rectitude*, and by comparing them to this Law it is that Men judge of the most considerable Moral Good or Evil of their Actions, that is, whether as Duties or Sins, they are like to procure them Happiness or Misery from the Hands of the Almighty.

* Essay on Human Understanding, B. 2. Ch. 28. § 8.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Whether God be a proper Subject of Obligation.

THE World has been generally pretty well agreed about this Point, and what I have to offer in this Chapter, might have well enough been spared, but that some late Writers have, out of a strange Piece of Affection, included all intelligent Agents (the supreme Being not excepted) under their Notion of *Obligation*, absurdly applying the same Measure or Rule to the Actions of the Creator and his Creatures. Let us see what Sense there is in such Language.

A *Moral Rule* is (as we said) a *Law* which an Agent *ought*, or *is obliged* to act conformably to. A *Law* includes *Obligation* in its very Idea, and *Obligation* is founded upon *Rewards and Punishments*, and therefore supposes the *Person obliged* to have a *Superior*.[†] For by what Power can a *Law oblige*, if the Breach of it shall not be attended with Misery? Or who can enact a Law, that has it

[†] Norma illa (scil ad quam actiones humanæ compонerentur) vocatur, Lex, quæ est decretus, quo superior sibi subiectum obligat, ut ad illius Praescriptum actiones suas compónat. *Puffendorf de Off. Hom. & Civ. C. 2. §. 2.*

not in his Power to punish the Transgressors of it? If therefore it be allow'd that God is the supreme Lawgiver, that he is independent, or out of the Reach of all other Beings, and infinitely happy in himself, in what tolerable Sense can it be said that God is obliged? Not *Physically*, I suppose, because he is acknowledged to have no Superior; not *morally*, because he does nothing with hopes of a Reward, or Fears of Punishment. Any other kind of Obligation is a new Language, not yet known among Philosophers.

But this perhaps will be called disputing about *Words* rather than *Things*;* and the Meaning in other Terms is only this, that as God is wise, just, and good, his Actions cannot but be conformable to the Reasons and Relations of Things.

Now as this is built upon a supposed *absolute* Fitness and Unfitness of Things arising from their own *eternal* Natures and Relations, *independent* of, and *previous* to the Will of any Being whatsoever,† I beg leave to premise an Observation or two on that Hypothesis, before I proceed to give a direct Answer to what is offer'd. And,

If. I observe, that the Terms, *Fitness* and *Unfitness*, are purely *relative*, being always applied to *Means*; and therefore necessarily refer-

* Reply to the Suppl. p. 11.
and Rev. Rel. Prop. 1.

† Dr. Clarke's Nat.

red to some *End** Thus Virtue is *fit* for a Rational Being, and Vice *unfit*, not absolutely or for their own Sakes, as ultimate Ends (which was the unintelligible Jargon of the Stoicks) but with relation to his Happiness, which must be the *final Cause* of every rational Action: And he that looks no farther than Virtue as built upon *absolute Fitness*, can have no just Idea of it, but must necessarily run into the same Absurdity, as the covetous Man, who places his very Happiness in Money, and looks upon it as something amiable, lovely and desirable for its own Sake. To this I may add, that an *absolute Fitness* (were these Terms proper) can never give a *moral Character* to Actions, because there is no Action but what may be fit in some Respect or other, and even the most contrary Actions may have equal *Fitnesses* in different Respects, and for different Ends. Hypocrisy is as *fit* to procure the End sought after by a Knave, as Honesty and Plain-dealing are *fit* for the End proposed by the Honest Man. The former is as *unfit* with respect to his Eternal Happiness, as the latter is oftentimes with respect to his worldly Interest.

2dly. 'Tis to be observed, that as there were no *Things*, and consequently no *Relations* or *Fitnesses ab eterno*, so they cannot be supposed previous to, or independent of the Will of

* Notes to Kng's Orig. of Evil, p. 22. Locke's Essay, B. 2.
Ch. 28. §. 4.

God. For as *Virtue* or *Vice* are nothing but abstract Ideas, expressing or representing the Method of Conduct or Behaviour, which dependent Beings ought or ought *not* to shew towards each other, so they can only commence upon a Supposition of God's having created such Beings; they are Consequences of the Existence of things, as the Existence of things is of God's Determination to create them.* There is indeed a kind of *Hypothetical Eternity*, † which is sometimes ascribed to universal and certain Truths, in opposition to such as are particular and contingent. What is meant by them is thus well explain'd by Mr. Locke, " Propositions being once made about abstract Ideas, so as to be true, will, whenever they can, be supposed to be made again at any Time past or to come, by a Mind having those Ideas, be always actually true." ‡ That is, since we are so fram'd as to have Ideas of Figure and Number as Modes of Quantity; whenever a Proposition is so form'd about them as to be agreeable to the supposed Nature of Quantity, it will be always true, or agreeable to the supposed Nature of Quantity. But what possible use can be made of this in the present Argument? Or in what Sense can it be said, that the Relations arising from the Natures of Things, are independent of, and antecedent to

* Notes upon the *Orig. of Evil*, p. 65. † Puffendorf's Law of Nat. B.1. C.2. §.6. ‡ Essay on Hum. Ud. B.4. C.11. §.14.

the Divine Will?—Not in time I suppose: but in the Order of Nature, or of our Ideas. A very little Logic will shew that *that* is as flat an Absurdity as the other. It cannot be said, that there will be certain Relations and Habitudes of things; except upon a *previous* Supposition of the Existence of certain things. And a Supposition of the Existence of certain Things, must be built upon a *previous* Supposition of God's Will to create them in such a certain Manner. Their Existence, Natures, Relations, &c. must be wholly owing to his Counsel and Appointment, *by whom are all things, and from whom are all things.*

The Case is the same in *moral* as in *natural* Relations: Suppose a System of rational Beings, whom God has created in a *social* State, it will then be *fit* and *right*, that they should act by the Rules of Justice, Equity, &c. because as God willed them to be *social* Creatures, he must therein will, that they should have a Law or Rule to act by, agreeable to their *social Nature*; because he cannot so far contradict Himself, as to will the *End* and not the *Means* necessary to procure that *End*.* Where then

* Thus Puffendorf argues against Grotius. " He [Grotius] alledges, for a Proof of the Independency of some of the Laws of Nature, the necessary Agreement and Disagreement of things to rational and social Nature. But Man obtain'd a social Nature from the good Pleasure of God Almighty, not from any immutable Necessity: and consequently the Morality

then is any thing that can be called independent of and antecedent to the Divine Appointment? The Creation is founded on God's Will, and the Relations of things on the Law of the Creation. They are so because God made them so; and if he had made the Creation under a different Law, had created Beings of a different Kind, then different Relations would have follow'd, and different Rules of Action have prevailed. And accordingly I observe;

3dly. That in Fact there is not any one Duty of Morality regarding the Conduct of Men towards one another, but what may be supposed mutable in itself, as arising from the particular Condition of Man, and to other Systems of Beings may possibly be no Virtue at all, or not so much as known. Thus some arise from Man's social Nature, as Justice, Equity, &c. but if there be any Beings who have no such social Nature, who do not depend upon one another for Happiness, but on God alone (which Supposition is possible at least) to such these will be no Duties. Others there are which proceed from the particular Frame and Constitution of Man's Body, as Temperance, Chastity, &c. Whereas 'tis easy to sup-

" Mity of Actions, agreeable or disagreeable to him, as a social
" Creature must be derived from the same Original and Spring,
" and must be attributed to Man, not by an' abstracte, but by
" an' hypothetical Necessity. Law of Nat. B. 1. C. 2. §. 6.
See also Notes on the Orig. of Evil, p. 196;

pose a System of Beings, either that have no material Bodies at all, or such as could not be capable of the Vices opposite to these Virtues ; and then to such these would be no *Virtues*.

These Things premised, I come to the Point of Enquiry, viz. *Whether God's Actions, must necessarily be conformable to the Relations and Reasons of Things?*

To which I answer, That God is perfectly free as to acting or not acting at all, so to every Manner of Action ; and by his being *perfectly free* I mean, that he is not determined by any thing *ab extra*. A late Author often puts such Questions as these * “ What “ determines God to act one way rather than “ another? What makes him command Good-“ ness rather than Evil ? ” I answer, His own Will. † If you go on and ask what determines his Will, I answer, nothing *ab extra*, no Phænomena, or Appearances of the Relations of things; to them (if any can be supposed) he is perfectly indifferent, being infinitely happy in himself and his own Perfections. All must be resolved into his Will, not as a blind Principle, actuated by Chance or Caprice, but by infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which are essential Perfections of his Nature. But to say, that God's Goodness, or

* Reply to the Suppl. p. 21.
Evil, Chap. 5. Sect. 1, Subsect. 4;

† See King's Orig. of

own internal Perfections determine him, is saying no more than that he determines himself, or (as 'tis well express'd by a late ingenious Author *) " That he does a thing, because " he is inclined to do"it, is assigning his " bare Will or Inclination for a Cause of his " Actions." If you go farther, and ask a Reason for this Inclination or Will, or, *Why God is necessarily good* †? I confess my Ignorance, and shall only say, that I will answer this Question when the Author who puts it will tell me, why God exists, why a House is a House, or a Triangle a Triangle. Every one knows, that as in Matters of Science there must be a *ne plus ultra* somewhere, or a Proposition so clear, that you are neither to expect a Proof of it, or a Reason why it is so rather than otherwise; in like manner as to real Existences, you must stop somewhere, and arrive at a Being, of whose Existence you are to expect no Reason, as being without Cause, and of whose Attributes and Perfections you are only to enquire what they are, and not why they are so rather than otherwise. Such Questions as those only shew the Ignorance of the Querist, as they are wholly founded upon that absurd Position of *Leibnitz*, that *nothing can be without a sufficient Reason*.

• Notes upon the *Orig. of Evil*, p. 189.
the Suppl. p. 23.

† Reply to

If it be farther ask'd, why upon our Hypothesis God might not as well have made that to be Virtue which in the present System of things is Vice, or *e contra*; or why two and two are equal to four, rather than to fifteen, or in the improper Terms of a late Writer,* "What makes God command *Goodness* rather than Evil;" or why he might not command Evil? I answer with the *Author of the Supplement*, that "tis putting an absurd self-contradictory Supposition." It is like asking, what if God should cease to exist? For when 'tis said, that whatever God commands, it will be Man's Duty to perform, (which is certainly true) this is built upon a Supposition, that *God is good*, for otherwise there could be no such thing as Virtue or Vice. Infinite, or irresistible Power cannot (as *Hobbs* contended) be sufficient to found a Law upon, because the Subjects can have no Security of a Reward for their Obedience.

Again he asks, "Why do you suppose God to be good rather than otherwise?" My Answer is, because I can prove him so without supposing the thing in Question. Not indeed *a priori* or "from the Perfection or Rectitude of his Nature," (which would be proving him *Good* from his *Goodness*) but *a posteriori*, or by ascending from Effect to Cause.

* Reply to Suppl. p. 21. † Suppl. to Nat. of the
Sacr. p. 13. || Reply to Suppl. p. 22.

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I don't remember that any of these Advocates for Virtue as founded in *abstract Fitnesses*, have attempted to give us any Proof that God is and must be good, except this be a Proof, that it follows from the essential Rectitude of his Nature; nor even to let us know what this Goodness means, except it be "a Disposition to act conformably to the Relations of things," which is saying nothing.

That it may not be thought that I have left the Question in the Dark, and have been labouring only to pull down the old System, without being able to erect a better in it's Room, I shall next proceed to enquire what it is that determines God's Actions, how it comes to pass, that the Laws of Nature are what we now find them to be, and in what Sense they are *arbitrary*, and in what *necessary*.

C H A P.

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C H A P. III.

*Concerning the Determining Cause of
God's Actions.*

WHAT I before laid down, proceeded upon a Supposition, that *God is Good*, and might be proved to be so without begging the Question in debate, *viz. a posteriori*. I shall now submit to the Reader, what I have to offer upon that Point.

By Goodness I mean, *a Disposition to do good, i. e. to communicate Happiness*. That this is an Attribute of the Deity appears from the Works of the Creation, which is evidently contrived for the good of the whole, or so as to manifest, that the Design of the Creator therein must be to communicate Happiness. And as he is perfect in Wisdom, so we may justly conclude, that he sees and knows all the Effects and Consequences of his Actions, and therefore cannot contradict himself, or sometimes will one thing, and sometimes the contrary; that is, he has a permanent Disposition to communicate Happiness, can no more cease to be good, than he can cease to exist, or to be what he is. This being granted, let us next suppose, that nothing exists but this infinitely good Being; and then let it be enquired, 1st. What could determine him to act, or to create any

any Beings at all. 2dly. What could determine him to act in any particular Manner, or to create this or that Kind of Beings rather than any other. 3dly. Whether, upon Supposition that a certain particular Kind of Beings should be created, it would be arbitrary or necessary, what should be their *Moral Law, or Rule of Action.*

1st. Let us enquire what could determine the Deity to act, or to create any Beings at all.

'Tis evident from what has been said, that the only Design of the Creator in any Action, must be to communicate Happiness, and that if he acts at all, it must be for that Purpose. This he can have no possible exciting Reason to, *extrinsec* to himself, or his own internal Perfections ; Because, as he is independent of all other Beings, and perfectly happy in himself, he can receive neither Advantage nor Disadvantage from things external, or from his Creatures, and therefore cannot be determined by them or their supposed Relations, Habitudes or Affections, either to act or not to act. The Cause of the Existence of Things must therefore be referred to his sole Will, and terminate in that only ; or, which is the same, his Goodness or *intrinsec* Desire of communicating Happiness, is the only Cause assignable for the Creation.

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2dly. When he had determined to act, and that for a certain End, viz. the Communication of Happiness; he saw by his *Wisdom*, what way that Happiness he intended might be most fully communicated, and the End best answered. For foreknowing what Relations, Effects or Consequences would result from such Natures form'd in his own Mind, he adjusted every thing in such a manner, as might best answer the End proposed. And thus the same intrinsick Goodness that determin'd God to exert his creative Power at all, determined him to create just such Kinds of Beings as he has created, the Scheme of the Creation being supposed to be, all things considered, the best that was possible; that is, the most fitted to serve that End which he proposed, *the Communication of Happiness*. If we suppose that there might be more ways than one of obtaining the same End, or that several Systems of Beings might have been created, equally answering that general Purpose of communicating Happiness, in this Case all is to be referred to his Free-Will or Choice; just as nothing else could determine him to create the World, at that Time, or in that Part of Space that he has created it in.

3dly. To the Enquiry, whether upon a Supposition, that a certain particular Kind of Beings was determined to be created, it would be *arbitrary* or *necessary*, what should be their *Moral Law*, or Rule of Action; I answer,
That

That when God had determined to create a certain System of Beings for a certain End, v. g. Men, that they might obtain Happiness; from such a Determination there must necessarily result a certain *derivative* Method of obtaining that End, which *primarily* depended upon the Will of God † (*sic.* as their particular Nature or Kind flow'd from thence) but in a *secondary* Sense may be look'd upon as *necessary*, that is, as following *necessarily* from the Nature and Condition particularly assign'd them. Just as if a Clock-maker endued with Free will, determines first to make a Clock, next a particular Sort of Clock; then, to accomplish the End designed, there must necessarily be certain Movements, so and so adjusted, and he is not at Liberty whilst this End is designed, to take what Method he pleases in order to accomplish it. Yet who will say, that all the Revolutions and Motions performed by this Clock are not wholly owing to his arbitrary Will who contrived and made it? In like manner, if God determin'd to create Man, that is, a rational and social Being, 'tis impossible (or rather absurd) that he should give him any other Rule of Action than what he has given him, 'tis impossible he should have made it his Duty to act unjustly, ungratefully, &c. or to live viciously,

† See King's Orig. of Evil, p. 191, 192.

intemperately, &c. Because this would have destroyed the very End and Design of his Being, and frustrated that very Scheme which God himself had purposed. Here then every *Thing*, every *Relation*, every *Habitude*, every *Fitness* (or what other *Affection* foever may be ascribed to the Nature of things) is owing to God's Will in its first Instance, and ultimately to be referred to that. He sees at one View, thro' all the Causes, Effects, and Consequences of things; and therefore, in that very Act of Volition whereby he determines the Existence of certain Things, he also determines their *Modes*, *Relations*, and every thing else belonging to them. And therefore, if Morality be supposed to flow immediately from these *Relations*, yet still it must be ultimately resolved into the *Will of God*, the Author of Nature, as its first and true Foundation.

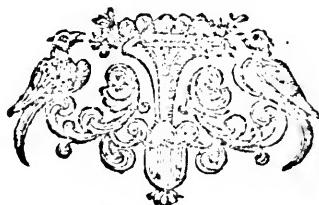
In the *Natural World* there are certain established Laws or *Rules of Motion*, as there are Rules of Action in the *Moral*. The former every Man sees and acknowledges to flow from, and be dependent on the Will of God, and yet they are as necessary to be observed by us as the latter, and their Obligation stands exactly upon the same Footing. A Man must not drink Poison, because by the Laws of Attraction and Repulsion, to which Matter is subject, it will put his Body into an unnatural State, and destroy the Animal System, contrary

trary to God's Design in the Creation: No more may Men be unjust, cruel, &c. because 'tis contrary to the established Moral Laws, would breed Confusion and Misery amongst them, and destroy the End which God designed them for, *viz.* Happiness. The Obligation in each Case is derived from the same Principle; 'tis immoral to give a Man a Potion which is known to be Poison, because God *would* that there should be that Relation betwixt his Body and the Liquor, which we find there is; 'tis immoral to deprive a Man of his Right, because God *was pleased* to give Man such a Nature, that Justice should be necessary to his Happiness and Well-being. Thus in the present System of things, both *natural* and *moral* Laws are eternally and immutably true; each of them equally necessary to be observed, and for the same Reasons; and each of them equally dependent on the Will of God, which only could determine him to create Matter what it is, and Men what they are. And thus we see in what Sense the Laws of Nature and Relations of Things are resolvable into God's Will, and in what Respect they are necessary; or why Virtue and Vice may not change Hands, any more than the same Things can be predicated of Circles and Squares. Such a *consequential* or *relative Necessity* as I have allowed, can, I think, by no Means serve the Purposes of those Men, who go upon the Scheme of *independent Fitnes-*
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ses : And for any other Sort of *Necessity*, there is just as much Sense in it, as in that imaginary one which Dr. Clarke invented, for the Ground and Foundation of the Existence of God. *

* See the different Senses of *Necessity* well distinguished in Notes upon the *Orig. of Evil*, p. 22, 23. And Dr. Clarke's Notion of *Necessary Existence* clearly and solidly confuted by the same Author, p. 36, 37.



CHAP.

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C H A P. IV.

That the Notion of Dr. Clarke and his Followers concerning Moral Obligation, resolves into Conscience, or an innate Moral Sense.

T IS very observable, that the Maintainers of this natural, necessary, or independent Fitness of Things and Actions, have constantly declined letting us know what they mean by *Moral Obligation* (except a Synonymous Term can be called a Definition *) and when they are called upon for a Reason, why these Fitnesses or Relations *must* be obeyed, or our Actions regulated by them, their Answer is, that " 'tis self-evident, † that all Men must " perceive it as much, and as exact as that " two and two are equal to four, ‡ that what " is right or wrong, more or less so, lies be- " fore us, 'tis contain'd in our own Ideas, || " and the like." — And this is all the Satisfaction that a Man of Sense is to expect in answer to his Doubts, concerning what Principle he is to act upon : Such Satisfaction as

* See Def. of the Answ. to Rem. p. 7. where *Obligation* is defined to be a *Tie*, to act agreeably to our Faculties.

† *Ibid.* p. 6. ‡ Dr. Clarke's Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 56.
|| Compar. Excell. & Oblig. p. 42.

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(I conceive) must necessarily leave him under the same Perplexities it found him, since it does not in the least inform his Reason, or go one Step towards working Conviction. Men who think for themselves, and do not take things upon trust, who will not be put off with Sounds for Sense, and Words for Reason, will easily see that every contested Truth must be deduced from First Principles, and that there are no First Principles in Morality, except that "Man has a Desire of Happiness, " and an Aversion to Misery, which do con- "tinue constantly to operate and influence all "our Actions *." This is what no Man ever did, or ever can deny, without Contradiction to himself and what he feels within him; and is, I believe, the only Principle in Morality that has not sometime or other been deny'd or called in question. And upon this, and this only, may a Philosopher proceed and build a firm and unshaken System of *Ethicks*, may discover what must be his *moral Rule*, and shew how he ought to act in any given Case. †

The grand Fountain of Error and false Reasoning in all Matters of Science, is, that Men embrace Propositions for self-evident, and build upon them as Principles, which are only submitted to upon Authority, and believed upon Prejudice, as being long thought

* *Locke's Essay*, B. 1. C. 3. § 3. † *Ibid*: B. 4. C. 3. §. 18.

true,

true, and implicitly received, with an Habitual Assent, without a Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas under the Terms. How justly an Imputation of such an implicit Faith may be fixt upon the Men who go no higher in Morality than *absolute Fitnesses*, must be left to the unprejudiced Reader to judge, and will be seen more fully hereafter.

'Tis not very easy to determine what is the real Opinion of these Writers concerning Moral Obligation, or what Ideas they have, when they say *a Man is obliged to do a thing*; and if I should mistake them, I hope they will excuse it, and explain themselves more fully upon that Head when they write again. The most I can make of it, from the Accounts of them who seem to have a Meaning, is, that Man is so framed or constituted, that he will necessarily find an Uneasiness, a Compunction of Conscience for violating these supposed Fitnesses, and a Self-complacency in following them, without Relation to any higher End, and *antecedent* to every other Consideration, and consequently he ought *not* to violate them. Thus we are told by Dr. Clarke,* "That the eternal Differences of "Good and Evil, do necessarily and unavoidably determine the Judgment, and no Man

* Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 54.

" willingly or deliberately transgresses this
 " Rule, in any great or considerable Instances,
 " but he secretly reproaches himself for
 " so doing." And one of the Dr's Followers
 says, † " that we are uneasy with ourselves,
 " and self-condemn'd, when we violate these
 " *Fitnesses*, from whence arises the strongest
 " Obligation." Which is as much as to say,
 every Man's own Conscience will tell him
 what is right and fit, and reproach him for
 acting contrary thereto. Now if this *same*
Conscience means no more than *our own Opinion of the moral Rectitude or Pravity of our Actions* (as || *Locke* and *Puffendorf* have defined it) then all that is said amounts to this, That he that sees what is *right* and *fit* to be done, judges that he is obliged to do it, or that it is *right* and *fit*, and therefore will condemn himself for neglecting it, or doing the contrary. Very true: he that reflects upon his having done an Action which he thinks to be morally evil, will accuse himself, and be sorry for it, because he is conscious, that the Breach of a *moral Duty* will be attended with Punishment. But when no such Consequence is apprehended, there can be no such Anxiety. What Uneasiness can an Atheist have in following any corrupt Inclinations, provided he is but secure against Halters, or Disgrace, or

† *Compar. Exc. & Oblig.* p. 17. || *Essay on H. Und.*
B. I. C. 3. §. 8. Puffendorf, B. I. C. 3. §. 4.

other

other temporal Inconvenience? Set these aside, and what Uncasiness can there be, when the Fear of God is out of the Question. And as often as a Man can hope to prevent Discovery, or can weather the Disgrace or Trouble, his *Virtue* is at an End. In short his Virtue will be nothing but his *Convenience*; for amongst all other *Fitnesses*, he must be allowed first to consider what is *fit* or convenient for himself.

But there is another Sense of *Conscience*, which perhaps these Gentlemen may like better: they seem to insinuate as if there was *something within us* (distinct from our Judgment, form'd upon Reason) directing our Actions, as a *Rule* or *Guide*, without farther Reference to any thing more remote. And 'tis from this internal Principle, I suppose, that they must deduce their *Moral Obligation*. Mr. *Butler* gives this Account of *Conscience*. * " 'Tis
 " that which pronounces determinately some
 " Actions to be in *themſelves* just, right, good;
 " others to be in *themſelves* unjust, wrong, evil,
 " without being consulted, or advised with,
 " &c. And a little after, This Faculty is natu-
 " ral, not merely as a Principle in the Heart,
 " &c." This is what some later Authors have
 called *Moral Sense*, which (as Mr. *Hutcheson*
 has well explain'd it †) is, " that *natural* in-
 " ſtinct, or internal Principle whereby we re-

* Serm. 2. p. 36.
 and Evil. §. 1. Art. 8.

† Inquiry concern. Moral Good

" ceive

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"ceive amiable or disagreeable Ideas of Actions,
"when they occur to our Observation,^{antecedent}
"to any Opinions of Advantage or Loss to re-
"dound to ourselves from them. * 'Tis that by
"which we are led to judge how to regulate
"our Elections among various Actions pro-
"posed, or to find which of them has the grea-
"test moral Excellency." This is so much
like the Language of Dr. Clarke and his Fol-
lowers, that I am persuaded, had they gone
deeper in their Enquiries, they must have got
to this *natural Instinct, or moral Sense.* Some
of them, I know, do readily grant it. Whe-
ther they will all or no, I know not; but I
may venture to say, with Mr. Huteson, that
"their Scheme is no otherwife intelligible, but
"upon a Supposition of a *moral Sense.*"† Up-
on this Account the Reader, I hope, will not
think it an unseasonable Digression, if I briefly
examine into what Foundation there is for such
an Hypothesis, and offer my Reasons against it.

* Inquiry concerng Moral G. and Evil', §. 3. Art. 8. p. 177.
† This is proved at large by Mr. Huteson, Illust. of the Ma-
ral Sense, p. 247.

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C H A P. V.

The Notion of an innate Moral Sense examined and confuted.

WHAT Mr. *Locke* † has advanced against innate practical Principles, may as justly be applied to all those Instincts, Passions, and Affections, which are generally look'd upon to be *natural*, and particularly the *Moral Sense*.

Tis evident, that if there were any such Sense or Principle implanted in human Nature, it ought to be universal, as the true *innate Principle of Self-love* is. For can any one imagine, that the wise Author of Nature would create Beings of the same Species with different *internal* Senfes, any more than with different *external* ones? Or would not this be the certain and ready way to make them be perpetually clashing and opposing each other, since their different Instincts must necessarily prompt them to pursue as different Ends. But 'tis a Fact too notorious to be contested, that Mens Approbations and Disapprobations are as different as the Customs and Notions of Policy in different Countries. Have not Theft, Exposing of Children, killing Men for Diversion in

* See his Essay on Hum. Und. B. i. C. 3.

publick Shews, an *honourable* Revenge, and a thousand things besides (which would shock the Conscience of every sober Christian) been allowed, practised, and approved by whole Nations. Not to mention the many Cruelties, Oppressions, and almost all other Enormities committed by Men, in Countries where such Crimes are in the general discountenanced, without the least Compunction or Remorse. And on the other hand, History will furnish us with Variety of Instances, of Nations having strong Antipathies or Aversions to Actions only from a received Notion of their being *unnatural*. Most Men have such an Aversion to incestuous Love, to the Dissection of human Bodies, as is by some thought *natural*. They have these Impressions not from a Conviction of their being *immoral*; but they have been taught from their Infancy to detest such Practices,† and from thence are *strongly persuaded*, that there is a natural Turpitude in them. How this Difference of Approbations and Aversions can be accounted for, consistently with the Hypothesis of a *Moral Sense*, or innate Principle of Benevolence; I cannot in the least apprehend. No Man can approve what he sees is hurtful to himself, be-

† Thus it is accounted for by Puffendorf, " Mere Use and Custom, when it hath born a long and unquestioned Sway, frequently puts on the Face and Resemblance of natural Reason. Law of Nat. B. 2. C. 3. §. 9.

cause the Principle of *Self-love* is *natural*; and if *benevolent* Affections were *natural* too, by Parity of Reason, no one could ever approve, or even be indifferent to Actions that were apparently *malevolent*. Upon this Scheme a *Nero*, or a *Hobbs*, are impossible Characters.

To answer, that Men as often act inconsistently with their own Happiness, as with the publick Good,† does not come up to the Point. The former they can never do but by Mistake, the latter they may by Design. Men cannot approve an Action, *because* 'tis hurtful to themselves, but they may, and frequently do, because 'tis hurtful to others, or else there can be no such Characters as revengeful, envious, cruel. And this is as good a Proof for *malevolent* Affections being *natural*, as any can be brought for *benevolent* ones.

Some have endeavoured to account for this Diversity of Opinions and Motives that Men act upon, consistently with the *moral Sense*, by calling all those barbarous and Monsters in their Kind who differ from them, and saying, that they have *corrupted the Sense*, and then contracted false Tasts, and vicious Affections, so as to call Good Evil, and Evil Good. But is not this taking a thing for granted which 'tis impossible to prove? May not others as well say, that we have altered and cor-

† This is the Answer given by Mr. *Hutcheson*, Imp. Sect. 4. Art. 2. and Mr. *Butler*, §. 1. p. 21.

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rupted our Original Nature by Custom and Habit, as we can affirm it of them *? Conscience may be pleaded for the worst of Actions; and unless we go farther, and examine our Principles by Reason, it will be to little Purpose to call others absurd and barbarous, because they differ from us; or to say with the Stoicks, we act according to *Nature*; they contrary to *Nature*, since every thing will be called *natural* which Men have a strong Propensity towards, without seeing a Reason for it. The true Reason why Men differ about the *Rule of Action* is, because 'tis neither innate nor self-evident, but must be traced out by a Chain of Reasoning, and will therefore require no little Pains and Reflection to discover it. Men may have false Opinions of the Will of the Deity, false Notions about the *Summum Bonum*, or false Judgments of the Tendencies of their Actions, and from thence will take wrong Steps in pursuing their main End, *Private Happiness*.

'Tis urg'd farther, in defence of the *moral Sense*, that tho' there be a great Diversity of *moral Principles*, and in consequence thereof, the same Actions are approved and disapproved in different Nations and Ages, yet this

+ " What Nation can take so much on itself, as to desire its own Manners and Proceedings should be the Standard in trying all others; and that whatever People did not exactly conform to its *Moral* should be immediately pronounced barbarous and savage" *Puffendorf's Law of Nat.* B. 2, C. 3. §. 7.

is

is only a Difference about the Means of pursuing the same general End, *viz.* Publick Good, which every one has at Heart †. “ Even Robbers shew a moral Sense in the equal or proportionable Distribution of the Prey, and in Faith to each other.” || ’Tis very surprising that Men should have a general Disposition to betray, rob, and plunder all Mankind, without Scruple, except those (a few in Comparison) of their own particular Clan: and that this Justice to their Partners should be imputed to a *moral Sense*, or natural benevolent Affections for Mankind. Is it not more probable that they act entirely upon a Principle of *Self love*, that they are Enemies to Mankind in general, out of a View to their own Interest, and faithful to each other upon the same View to Convenience or Usefulness? Or is it not true in Fact that they generally do betray their Faith to each other, when they apprehend it to be for their Safety and Advantage? I cannot therefore pay such a Compliment to Mankind, as to say that there are none without benevolent Affections; but must be so just to those that have them, as to think that they are all of their own making, or acquired; and that there is no one Principle that can be called innate, or natural to Man, except that of *Self-love*, which

† Hume’s Inq. §. 4. Art. 3.

|| Ibid. p. 209.

is a necessary Consequence of Perception. The Case seems to me to be this ; when Men discover, or are taught that Benevolence is necessary for their Well-being in Society, or that the surest way to *private Happiness* is to do *publickly* useful Actions, and to abstain from those which are publickly hurtful, they will approve the former, and love the Agent, and disapprove the latter, and hate the Agent. But they, who are not sensible how nearly private and publick Happiness are united and conjoined (as a great Part of Mankind 'tis to be feared are not), have no benevolent Affections, but are indifferent to the Happiness or Misery, the Virtue or Vice of every one else.

'Tis objected †, that this Scheme can never account for the principal Actions of human Life ; 'tis a Matter of Fact not to be contested, " that a great Part of Mankind at least have disinterested Affections, that they act upon other Principles than Self-love, " that there are such things in Life as unselfish Friendship, Compassion, Gratitude, Parental and Filial Affection, and a great many different Modes of benevolent Dispositions." And then the Argument will stand thus ; there are such Affections in Mankind as these enumerated, therefore they are natural Instincts :

† By Mr. Hutcheson, Illustr. p. 20.

A Consequence too wide to be admitted ; 'tis just as if a natural Philosopher should argue, that the Waters of the Sea ebbe and flow once in twelve Hours, therefore 'tis natural for them so to do. Now, where a Phænomenon is solv'd by an Hypothesis, the most that can be concluded, is, that the Solution is possible or probable, not that the true Cause is certainly assign'd. But in this Case there is not even so much as *that* to be pleaded in its Behalf; because it rather resolves the thing into an occult Quality, an *ignotum quid*, than affigis any Cause why the Fact is so. And therefore if we can go one Step higher, and shew how they may be all acquired upon the Hypothesis of *Self-love*, and *that only* being natural ; it will then I hope be granted, if not that the Solution is certainly true, yet at least that 'tis possible, and therefore that there is no Neceſſity of recurring to a *Moral Sense*, or natural Principle of Benevolence. The great Mr. *Locke* was the first who gave any Hints towards a Solution of this Phænomenon in human Nature, and his Scheme has lately been improved upon in a *Preliminary Dissertation* to an *English Version* of A-B. *King's Origin of Evil*. The former observes, * " That Ideas " which used to appear in the Mind together, come by that Means to be so united,

* *Essay on Hum. Und.* B. 2. C. 33.

" that 'tis very hard to separate them. They
 " always keep in Company, and the one no
 " sooner at any time comes into the Under-
 " standing, but its *Associate* appears with it.
 " This strong Combination of Ideas ~~not~~ allied
 " by Nature, the Mind makes in itself, either
 " voluntarily, or by Chance, and hence it
 " comes in different Men to be very different,
 " according to their different Inclinations, E-
 " ducations, Interests, &c." And upon this
 Hypothesis he gives a very rational Solution
 of the many unreasonable Fears, Antipathies,
 and other whimsical Affections observable in
 most Men; and hints, that the Passions may
 be accounted for in the same way, and in-
 stances || in *Hatred* or *Aversion* arising from the
 receiving an Injury. Mr. *Hutcheson* gives the
 same Account of what he calls *Secondary Desires*; as Ambition, Covetousness, Malice, &c.
 And the Author of the *Preliminary Dissertation* before mentioned has carried his Enqui-
 ries farther, and shewn clearly how we may
 trace the Original of all the *Passions* observa-
 ble in human Nature. I shall take the Liberty
 to borrow his Words † upon this Point.
 " We at first perceive or imagine some real
 " Good, i. e. fitness to promote our Happi-
 " ness in those things we love and approve
 " of: Hence we annex Pleasure to those things,

|| *Essay on Hum. Und.*, B. 2. C. 33. §. 11.

† p. 30.

hence

" hence those things and Pleasure are so ty'd
 " together and associated in our Minds, that
 " one cannot present itself but the other will
 " also occur. And the *Association* remains e-
 " ven after that which at first gave them the
 " Connection, is quite forgot, or perhaps does
 " not exist, but the contrary. An Instance or
 " two may perhaps make this clear. How
 " many Men are there in the World who have
 " as strong a *Taste* for *Money* as others have
 " for Virtue, who count so much Money so
 " much Happiness, nay even sell their Hap-
 " piness for Money ; or to speak more properly,
 " make the *having* Money, without any Design
 " or Thought of using it, their ultimate End?
 " But was this Propensity to Money born with
 " them? Or rather, Did they not at first
 " perceive a great many Advantages from be-
 " ing possessed of Money, and from thence
 " perceive a Pleasure in having it, thence de-
 " sire it, thence endeavour to obtain it, thence
 " receive an actual Pleasure in obtaining it,
 " thence desire to preserve the Possession of it?
 " Hence, by dropping the intermediate Means
 " between Money and Happiness, they join
 " Money and Happiness immediately toge-
 " ther, and content themselves with the Fan-
 " tastical Pleasure of having it, and make
 " that which was at first pursued only as a
 " Means, be to them a real *End*, and what their
 " real Happiness or Misery consists in. Thus the
 " Connection between Money and Happiness
 " remains in the Mind, tho' it has long since
 ceas'd

" ceas'd between the things themselves."---In the same manner we may account for Benevolence, and the whole Tribe of *Publick Affections*, which are in reality so many Habits or Associations, and are easily acquired. At first a Man perceives, or is taught from his Infancy, that as he lives in a *social State*, so his Happiness is necessarily connected with that of other Men; that the Esteem of others is useful and necessary for him, and that this Esteem is only to be procured by beneficent Actions, and an inward Concern manifested by his outward Actions for the Good of others.* Hence he desires the Happiness of others, and joins Pleasure to that Idea, whence there is such an Association formed, that the former never appears in the Mind without the latter; that is, whenever he contemplates the Happiness of another, he approves, or is pleas'd with it, without Reference to any farther End. This Benevolence is rooted in our Minds, and forgetting how it came there, we are apt to

* To this Purpose says Ep. *Curbarland*: *Indies conspiciunt omnes operam hominis alteri commodatam efficeri posse, ut Homo vivat, conservetur.*—*Sentient insuper omnes Benevolentiam suam non se tantum & paucos sed & valde multos juvare posse; cum alios videant sibi quorsus similes, ab illis vicem rependi posse, plurimisq; ope mutuâ tonis singulos cumulari posse non possint non cogitare; quæ quidem omnibus defutura sunt eorumq; loco singulis innumerae impendere vita Discrimina summariaq; Egostatem, si sibi solis pròspicientes singuli in alios essent semper malevoli* De Leg. Nat. Cap. 1: §. 14. See also *Puffendorf's Law of Nat.* who well accounts for *Friendship*, Parental Affections, &c. B. 2. C. 3. §. 14.

think it natural, and act upon it as a Principle entirely distinct from Self-love. And thus, tho' private Happiness is the Foundation upon which all our rational Actions are built, yet it does not follow from thence that we have no other Motive to Action: That is the Stock upon which a great many different Branches are engrafted. We may at first pursue a certain End (suppose the Happiness of others) from the Motive of Self-love, afterwards forget that first Motive, and pursue the End entirely for its own Sake, by which means it becomes an ultimate End, and influences us as such. And in the same Manner we may account " for the sudden Approbation, and " violent Sense of something amiable in Ac- " tions done in distant Ages and Nations, " while the Approver has never thought of " those distant *Tendencies* to his Happiness."* For upon this Hypothesis 'tis not necessary that any such Tendency should be known, imagined, or thought of; because a constant Habit of approving virtuous Actions for the sake of their good Tendency towards private Happiness in general, makes us love and be pleased with them, when no such Tendency is apprehended; just as in the Instance above, a frequent Desire of Money for the sake of the good Things it will purchase, at length

* See *Hutcheson's Illustr.* p. 209.

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becomes a Love of Money *as such*, and turns a Means into a real End. 'Tis the constant Indulgence of a Desire, and the frequent Repetition of, and Attention to it, that begets such strong *Affections* of Ideas, as frequently carry Men beyond their Reason, and make the less observing and judicious Part of the World think, that this is the Effect of the natural Frame and Temper of their Minds. Thus Men are said to be naturally of a good or bad Temper, that is, benevolent or malicious, meek or proud, calm or passionate, forgiving or revengeful; when nothing of these different Dispositions are owing to their Nature or particular Frame, but to either a designed or accidental *Affection* of Ideas.

A great deal more might be brought from Observation and Experience, in Confirmation of the Truth of what I have offered: and I am confident, that the more diligent and accurate Observer a Man is of human Nature, he will be so much the more confirmed in the Opinion, that all our Passions and Affections are not innate but acquired. But as I fear the Reader will think I have already digressed too far from the Question in debate: I shall now dismiss this Point, only adding an Observation or two, by way of Application of it to the Subject of Morality. And

Ist. I observe that this *Moral Sense* can be of no use towards settling the fundamental Principle of Morality, can be no manner of Rule

Rule or Guide to us how to act, because we must have a pre-established Notion or Opinion, what is morally Good or Evil before it can operate. For 'tis by this settled Judgment or Opinion, that we have amiable or disagreeable Ideas of Actions *apprehended* to be morally Good or Evil. An Action is not morally Good because approved, nor morally Evil because disapproved; but 'tis approved because apprehended to be morally Good, or disapproved because morally Evil; that is, the Approbation or Dislike is not antecedent but subsequent to our Apprehension of the moral Good or Evil in Actions.

2dly. Since it has been shewn, that *Moral Obligation* as built upon these supposed *Fitnesses* must resolve at last into *Conscience* or the *Moral Sense*, and also that this *Sense* is not of Nature's forming but acquir'd by Custom, Education or accidental Associations, and as such may be directed to either proper or improper Objects, may lead us either to Happiness or Misery, and accordingly is in Fact found to be very different in different Men; 'tis evident that its Determinations can be no certain Rule to act by, no solid Foundation to build Morality upon. A strong Persuasion of Mind taken up without a rational Enquiry upon Prejudice or any other false grounds can never be sufficient to make an Action good or innocent, as it ought to be according to those Men, who being press'd for a Reason of Moral Obligation

tion, only fly to this *internal Principle*, which is suppos'd to check and reprove us for every Violation of the *Fitnesses of things*. Surely all *Errors* in Opinion are not *innocent*, nor every Conscience *right*; for if so, then Rebellion, Sacrilege, Persecution and all other Crimes may be look'd upon as excusable at least, if not commendable; because Conscience always may be, and generally is, pleaded by Persons guilty of such sort of Enormities. Every one grants that we ought to act according to our Conscience, and shall be uneasy and self-condemn'd if we do not, but this is no Proof that such Actions are always innocent, as must be evident to every one who has but heard of an *erroneous Conscience*. Upon the whole, the *Fitness and Unfitness of things* so much talk'd of, must, when explain'd, necessarily terminate in an aptness to raise Approbations and Dis-approbations of Actions in the observer; and (a) yet these are accidental, mostly what Fancy, or Custom, or Authority (all built upon Prejudices) pleases; and if it be allow'd, that Virtue and Vice are independent of these and something real, it follows, that unless we go higher than these *abstract Fitnesses* and trace out *Obligation* from Principles of Reason, and such as the World is more agreed about, we must necessarily continue in the Dark, and talk a Language which no Body understands. I hope what is offer'd in this short Essay may

(2) See Lock's Ess. on Hum. Und. B. 2. c. 28. Sect. 10.

contribute something towards leading these Gentlemen out of the Mist they seem to have been in; as my constant Endeavour has been to find out and represent their Meaning as clearly and fairly as I could, in order to put the Controversy upon an intelligible Footing, and bring the Cause to an Issue. However, if I have not been so happy as to understand them yet, I should be glad to be better inform'd, what they mean by these Words; *Eternal Relations, Absolute Fitness, Natural Congruity, Moral Obligation, Duty, Right, Reasonable, Preferable, &c.* I have explain'd them as well as I could; not in a Sense peculiar to my self, but as (b) *Stillingfleet*, (c) *Lock*, (d) *Puffendorf*, (e) *Barbeyrac*, (f) *Cumberland*, (g) *Parker* and other great Names have

(b) *Stillingfleet's Irenicum*, Ch. I. § 4. The Sanction of the Law of Nature depends upon the *Will of God*, and therefore the Obligation must come from him, it being in the Power of no other to punish for the breach of a Law, but those who had the Legislative Power to cause the Obligation to it.

(c) *Lock's Essay*, B. 2. c. 28. § 5 and 8 before cited. — B. 1. c. 3. § 18. If Virtue be taken for Actions conformable to God's Will, or to the Rule prescribed by God, which is the *true and only Measure of Virtue*, &c.

(d) *Puffendorf's Law of Nature*, B. 1. c. 2. § 6. It does not appear how we can conceive any [moral] Goodness or Turpitude before all Law, and without the Imposition of a Superior.

(e) *Barbeyrac in loco*. To say an Action is honest or dishonest in its own Nature without any Relation to the Appointment of God, is false.

(f) *Cumberland, de Leg. Nat. Cap. 5. § 27.* Obligatio est Actus Legislatoris quo Actiones Legi sive conforme- eis, quibus Lex fertur necessaria esse indicat. Actio autem agenti rationali tunc necessaria esse intelligitur, cum certum est eam contineri in causis necessariis requisitis ad Felicitatem illam, quam naturaliter adeoque necessariis expedit.

(g) *Parker's Demonstr. of Law of Nat.* Part I. § 31. To tell

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have understood them. To confirm this I have thrown a few Citations into the Margin, chiefly for the sake of a Gentleman who pretends that all the learned World are on his and Dr. Clarke's Side, and that the *Autor of the Nat. and Oblig. of the Sacraments* " is quite singular in his Notions, and without one single Authority to appear on his Side, except a Schoolmaster of Hull." (Compar. *Excel. & Oblig. of M. and P. Duties*, p. 2.) It would become that Declaimer to be more reserved and sparing of his Censures, and not to pronounce so authoritatively (as his Manner is) 'till he has read more, or can judge better who are for him, and who against him.

Having said enough to shew what Principles we go upon in deducing *moral Obligation*, in opposition to the Scheme advanc'd by Dr. Clarke, I shall next proceed to consider what has been offered by way of Objection to the *Supplement to the Treatise on the Sacraments*, in two late Pamphlets, the one call'd, *The true Foundation of Nat. and Rev. Relig. in Reply to the Suppl. &c.* The other; *Some Reflections on Moral and Positive Duties*, by Mr. Chubb.

us that Nature alone obliges us to Virtue is to say nothing at all, unless you would inform us too, by what Sanctions this Nature ties her Obligations upon us. For there can be no Obligation that is not enforc'd by Rewards and Penalties.

To these might be added several more, all the best Moralists being on our Side, *Gratius* only and *Clark* on the other. See particularly *Goyre*, who largely insists upon it in his *Byzlean Lectures*.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

Objections answered.

IT IS to be observed that these Writers keep chiefly on the offensive, and are great Dealers in Objections; finding it not so easy to build a System of Morality upon their Principles. Most of what they have offered has been obviated already, as a true System being established, all others contrary to it must fall of course. But because I would not be wanting to common Readers, I shall examine distinctly every thing that has been offered, which bears the Face of an Argument.

I. 'Tis objected, that the Word *Law* does not always stand* for the *Command of a Superior*, but sometimes signifies a *Rule of Action*: and to the same Purpose Mr. Chubb says †, "The Law of Nature is called a *Law*, not as being the Command of a Superior, but as it is a *Rule of Action* to intelligent Beings." Well: but what is a Law then in this Sense?—Why the Author of the Reply ‡ tells us, "'Tis the Rule which regulates the Practice of Moral Agents, or 'tis the Rule

* Reply to the Suppl. p. 6.
and Post Duties, p. 53.

‡ P. 7.

† Reflections on Mor.

which

which is the *Rule* of the Practice of Moral Agents. A very shrew'd Definition! Law, Rule, Obligation, &c. are hard Words, we see, to a Man who sets aside the Consideration of Happiness or Misery. In a former Pamphlet *, *an Obligation was a Tie*, and now a *Law is a Rule*, and a *Rule is that which regulates*. One would be apt to suspect that this Author had proposed to himself Mr. Serjeant's *Sure-footing* † for his *Rule* of arguing, who proves *Tradition to be a Rule*, because a *Rule is a Rule*. 'Tis however very evident that he has no settled determinate Ideas of these Words, because he is always in the Dark, when he comes to explain them, a certain Sign that a Man's Head is in Confusion, or that he has raken things upon trust. But to consider the Objection, — What is a *Law* or *Rule of Action* without a Superior? 'Tis a Law without a Sanction; a Law which there is no Body to put in Execution; i. e. a Law without an Obligation, or a Law and no Law. But perhaps the Meaning is, that it is a *Rule of Action*, the Breach of which will be attended with natural Inconveniences, without the Sanction of positive Rewards and Punishments. But (besides that the Consideration of these Inconveniences is expressly excluded both by Dr. Clarke ‡ and this Author||) I

* Defence of the Answ. to Rem. p. 7.
Pref. to Tillotson's Serm. Vol. I.

† See the

Prop. I. §. 7. p. 218.

‡ Nat. and Rev. Rel.
|| Reply to the Suppl. p. 14.

answer,

answer, there can be no Morality in complying with any Rule except that perfect adequate one, *the Will of God*. A Physician may prescribe a Rule of Dyet, and persuade his Patient to comply therewith; but such a Compliance is never look'd upon to be moral, because the Physician not having the Happiness and Misery of the Patient in his Power, can never bind him to the Observation of his Prescriptions. If it be said, that the Patient may be convinc'd of the Fitness of the Rules given him to preservc his Health, and therefore *is obliged* to comply with them upon a Principle of Self-interest, and therefore such a Compliance *is moral*; I answer, that 'tis not every Action done upon a View to Self-Interest or private Happiness that can be called *Moral*, but only such as are referred to the *Sumnum Bonum*, and are compared with the Rule founded upon that; and 'tis not every Rule which is properly *moral*, but only such an one as is adequate and complete, because 'tis Obedience to that only which can secure our Happiness in the main, and therefore will be always obligatory, which Morality is understood to be. Self-Interest, or Selfishness, are Words importing a Conformity of Actions to the Rule of temporal or worldly Interest, which no doubt is fit or reasonable, where it does not clash or interfere with that of another Life, which ought always to be

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taken into the Account: but this is never called Virtue, but Prudence. But postponing a present Interest or Pleasure, for the sake of a future Reward, is rational and *fit*, and properly *moral*, because done in Conformity to the *Will of God* (the only adequate Rule of Action) founded upon the Prospect of private Happiness upon the whole. What is there in all this that can be applied to the supreme Being? Yes: 'Tis said, * "there must be a "Rule of Action to all intelligent Agents, and "therefore to the supreme Being, and that "Rule is a *Law*, and thence comes *Obligation*." To which I answer, That God's own *Will* and *Wisdom* together are his whole Rule of Action: his seeking the Happiness of his Creatures, resolves into his Inclination or *Will*; but his chusing such Means for it (after the primary Act of Volition is fix'd) resolves into his *Wisdom*. His own Perfections; his own Nature dictates, regulates and directs, yet he falls not under *Law* or *Obligation*: unless it can be said, that he is obliged to be perfect, or is obliged to be what he cannot but be, which is as much as saying that he exists in Virtue of some Law, which is Nonsense, or resolves into a *Principle extrinsic*. The Reply denies this Case to be parallel, † because "Obligation presupposes *Will* and *Choice*, and Power

* Reply to the Suppl. p. 7. and Chubb's Reflect. p. 54.
† p. 9.

" to

" to act otherwise; whereas God's *Existence* is
 " not an *Act* of Will, but is strictly necessary;
 " he cannot but exist." *His Existence is strictly necessary*; and is he not as necessarily good? Whatsoever Necessity he exists by, by the same is he wise, good and perfect; and consequently 'tis as absurd to say he is obliged to act according to Goodness as to exist: he cannot but act in such a Manner. *Obligation presupposes Will and Choice*; but then it is arbitrary *Will* and *Choice*, and is never applicable to Cases which, though *voluntary*, are not *free*. A Man cannot be said to be obliged to love himself; because 'tis impossible he should do otherwise; 'tis impossible he should chuse to be eternally miserable rather than eternally happy. So God's chusing what is good, is not *free*, tho' *voluntary*: He cannot chuse Evil because he is perfect: It would be Imperfection to chuse Evil, it is his natural necessary Perfection to be above the Capacity of chusing amiss; and so he can no more chuse Evil than he can cease to exist. His *moral* Perfection here resolves into *natural*, and both are one.

II. Mr. Chubb objects,* " That if it depends upon the Will of God, what shall constitute Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, then all these stand upon a precarious Bot-

* Reflect. on M. and P. Dut. p. 37.

" tom, because God may be constantly alter-
 " ing his Will." How can the Determinations
 of a perfect Being be *precarious* and uncer-
 tain? When it is proved that God is *good*
 (which I have shewn may be done *a posteriori*) and also that he is *independent*, which fol-
 lows from his necessary Existence, or Existence
 without Cause *, 'tis an immediate Consequence,
 that he is immutable, and therefore his Will is
 eternally and unalterably the same. And this
 may be an Answer to the Question, the other
 Author whom I am concerned with proposes,
 " † how we prove God to be *necessarily*
 " wise and good;" for to prove him *actually*
 wise and good, is to prove him *necessarily* so,
 not putting Necessity as *casual*, but *negatively*;
 that as there can be no Cause for his changing,
 he cannot change (because every Change is an
 Effect, and supposes a Cause) as he cannot
 cease to exist, any more than a Being can begin
 to exist without Cause. We first argue from
 Fact, and then proceed upon supposing what
 we have proved concerning the Divine Nature,
 to carry our Enquiries farther by rational De-
 ductions, which, whether they are clear and

* See the Proof of this in an ingenious Treatise, called, *An Enquiry into the Evidence of the Christian Religion*, p. 20. printed at Cambridge, 1728.

** Supposing human Nature and human Affairs to be fixt
 " and constant, the Law of Nature, tho' it ow'd its original
 " Institution to the free Pleasure of God, remains firm and im-
 " moveable. Puffendorf's Law of Nat. B. 2. C. 3. §. 5.
 † Reply to Suppl. p. 24.

cogent, I leave to the Reader to judge; but must insist upon it (in opposition to what is said in the Reply*) that the Method of Argumentation is right in point of Logic.

III. 'Tis objected by Mr. Chubb, † " That
 " God cannot will 'Things to be otherwise
 " than they are in their own Natures; he
 " cannot will any thing to be Good or Evil,
 " which was not so before the Exercise of his
 " Volition, because this is to suppose a Power
 " in God to constitute a Difference, when
 " there is none in Nature." To which I an-
 swer, that if *by the Nature of things* be
 meant any thing more than the Mode and Cir-
 cumstances of their Existence, 'tis an extrin-
 sick Principle, an *Anima Mundi*, something I
 can form no Idea of. But if it signifies the
 same, then I say that the Natures of all things
 are what he of his own good Will and Plea-
 sure determined them to be, forasmuch as their
 Essences, Forms, and Modes of Existence are
 all owing to his Will: And therefore, to say
 that God cannot make things to be otherwise
 than they are in their own Nature, or consti-
 tute a Difference where there is none, is as
 much as to say, he cannot create things in a
 different Manner from that which he deter-
 mined they should be created in, nor *will* the
 two opposite Sides of a Contradiction at the

* Reply to Suppl. p 23.

† Reflect. on Mor. &c. p 34.

fame time. He cannot *will* that Ice should have the Nature of Fire, or Light be the same as Darkness ; because he has already determined that they should have different Natures.

The same Objection set in another Light, is brought by the Author of the *Reply to Suppl.** He seems surprised to hear, that " Actions which would be Folly and Madness without God's Command, should upon his Command, commence Virtues and put on Obligation." One would have thought, that a Man of much less Penetration than this Author pretends to be, might easily have got over this Difficulty, even upon his own Hypothesis. For do not the Relations and Circumstances changing change the very Nature of the Action from Good to Evil, or *vice versa*. The material Part of all Actions are indifferent in a moral Sense : and the Formality of them must be learn'd from the Circumstances the Agent is in, and the Relation of the Action to some known Law. To kill a Man, is an Action neither good nor bad, fit nor unfit *absolutely in itself*,† but it may be one or t'other, according to the different Circumstances the Agent is in. It would be Madness and Folly for a Man to hazard his Life, or submit to Hardships, Restraints, and Self-denials, without some Equivalent in Hand or in Prospect : yet it may be Wisdom and Prudence to do it in.

* p. 12, 17, 18.
C. 2. §. 6.

† See Puffendorf's Law of Nat. B. I.

hopes of a sufficient Recompence. *Abraham* must have been mad, or worse, if he had determined the Sacrifice of his Son without a Divine Command; but when God had required it of him (in whom he could securely rest and confide) it then commenc'd Duty and Virtue, and *Abraham's* Obedience was imputed unto him for Righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.* Mr. *Chubb* indeed condemns *Abraham* for his ready Compliance in this Instance,† and he might with as much Reason blame God for enjoining it. From whence we see what a pernicious and dangerous Error it is to place Morality in any thing else than the Will of the Deity. And I must own, whatever the Author of the Reply has said ‡, I cannot but think, we pay a greater Compliment to it by referring it thither than any where else; because the Divine Command is the only Thing that can make an Action *fitting* upon the whole. It is Fallacy and begging the Question to say, that this or that Action is *fitting*, or *fit to be done*, only because it may be, or will be *beneficial* to some body. It must be beneficial also to the Agent himself, otherwise 'tis fitting only *secundum quid*, and not *simpliciter*, *fit* in a certain Respect, not so upon the whole. But God's Command being always connected with infinite Goodness, shews

* St. James ii. 23. † Suppl. to his previous Question,
p. 18. Case of *Abraham* consider'd, p. 241. in 4th. ‡ P. 18.
the

the Action to be *fitting* simply or upon the whole, or rather makes it so; and then it is *eligible* and *obligatory*.

If we must talk in the Language of these Advocates for *Fitnesses*, we should call the *Fitnesses* which they speak of, *partial Fitnesses*, or rather *Unfitnesses*; as wanting the most essential Part of the *Fitness* of an Action, viz. Beneficinalness to the Agent himself. God's Command supplies that *Part* of Fitness before wanting, and makes it now wise and fitting to chuse what before could not have been wisely chosen, being unfitting: for what is not *fit* upon the whole, is really *unfit*. How absurd is it then to throw Convenience or Utility quite out of the Question? If it would be unreasonable and foolish for a Man to forfeit his Life for the sake of Truth (whether it be for asserting the Antipodes, or any thing else) upon a Prospect of a future State of Rewards, will it be equally so, to do it for the sake of eternal Happiness? Or if to work for another Man when he has not employ'd you, and will not reward you, be Madness and Folly, then to do his Business when he has set you at work and will pay you for it, is the same Madness and Folly? Ask but your Servant what he thinks of this Argument. You ask || " if a thing foolish *in itself* can become rational and fit by being commanded." I scarce

know what *foolish in itself* means, except when 'tis applied to *foolish Arguments*: That may be folly in one Man, which would be Wisdom in another; and that Religion may be bad at one Time which is good at another; as it may be wise and prudent for a legislative Power to enact different Laws at different Seasons, according as the Subjects are in different Circumstances, or of different Tempers, Capacities and Powers.

This Objection is much the same with what a late Libeller of Christianity has offered against an instituted Religion.* *If God be immutable. Religion must be so too, the same to all Men.* If he would only consider, that though God be unchangeable, Men are changeable; he would easily see, that sometimes one Religion may be fit, sometimes another, according as the Subjects are under different Circumstances; that it would be Madness and Folly in us to observe the Religion of the Jews, which yet it was once Wisdom and Prudence for them to observe. The whole Absurdity is built upon a supposed Fitness and Unfitness, *absolute in themselves* (Words without Sense or Meaning) as if no Circumstances could alter the Nature of an Action, and change its Unfitness into a Fitness, or the contrary; whereas in reality, all the Fitness of an Action arises from the particular Circumstances the Agent is

* Christianity as old as the Creation, Ch. 6.

in, which being chang'd, the very Nature of the Action, as to any Fitness or Unfitness, is chang'd at the same time:

IV. The Author of the Reply, &c.* endeavours to shew, that all Morality lies in *Speculative Truth*, and objects to our Scheme, that we judge of it from *Convenience* or *Inconvenience* only. "The right Use of our Faculties (says he) is to examine and compare the Relations of things." And is not the Relations of things to our own Happiness, a very material Relation worth examining into? If you set that aside, you might as well say, that the only true and right Use of our Faculties is to study Geometry, tho' Poverty and Ruin were the inevitable Consequences of it, or tho' we were in *Archimedes's Condition*, with Destruction and Fire about our Ears. *Speculative Truth* is as far from *Moral Obligation* as Indolence from real Happiness; in short, you may harangue as long as you please upon two and two being equal to four, or of parallel Lines being every where equally distant, 'tis nothing to a rational Being any farther than you can shew its Relation to his Happiness. But it seems "there is a certain Agreement of [moral] Ideas, which does not depend upon the Will or Command of God, or upon Convenience to ourselves." Probably there may be such to this Writer; if there be, let

* p. 13, 14, 15.

me tell him, that 'tis only a wrong Association of Ideas (which at length becomes a Habit) without any distinct Reason at all. And to say "that in the Case of Moral Ideas it signifies "nothing whether I am to be Gainer or Loser," seems to me to be banishing Morality out of the World, as all the Relation in moral Ideas that I can possibly discern, is the Relation of certain Actions to the Agent's Happiness.

Mr. Chubb objects to the same Purpose *, That Rewards and Punishments don't alter the Nature of our Duty, "because a Rule of Action is, in order of Nature, before the Sanctions which are annexed to enforce it,--that is, a Law or Rule of Action does not become reasonable by having great and valuable things promised to those who keep it, &c." To which I answer, That Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments don't indeed affect the Reasonableness of a Law with regard to the Imposers, but with regard to the Subjects they must, nay generally be all the Reason they have for their Obedience. If therefore you apply reasonable to the latter, the Assertion is false, if to the former, 'tis impertinent. A Law is good for nothing any farther than Obedience to it is to be attended with Happiness, Disobedience with Misery. Take away the Sanctions of a Law, and you take away

the very Essence of it at the same Time.*

But the Author of the Reply, &c. objects farther, " God does not follow these Fitnesses, " because they are suited to his Convenience " or Interest, nor because they are founded " upon any Law or Command." True; and this is the very Reason why moral Agency or Virtue cannot be applied to him. He can have no foreign Motive to influence or direct him; all is owing to his own intrinsic Inclination to communicate Happiness. I cannot but think it an unwarrantable Liberty which these Gentlemen take, in applying the same *Obligation, Motives, Duty, &c.* to the *Almighty* and his Creatures. † For, who that has used the least Reflection on these Subjects, does not see that the Manner, Reasons, Motives, &c. of God's Actions must be as different from those of Men, as Heaven is from Earth. He is independent, infinitely perfect, and infinitely happy in himself. All created Beings are dependent, subject to Error, capable as well of Misery as Happiness. And as they were created only to obtain Happiness, they must be sensible that 'tis the Will of God, as well as what their own

* Omnis Vis Legis constit insignificando eo, quid superior à nobis fieri velit vel non velit, & qua Pena Violatoribus Legis sit Constituta. *Puffendorf de Off. Hom. Et. C. 2. § 7.* To the same Purpose says *Cumberland* in Proleg. § 6. Manifestum est eas esse vere Leges qua nihil aliud sunt, quam ejusmodi Propositiones Praedicatæ cum annexis Peccatis præmissis ab auctore idoneo promulgatae. † See the Absurdity of this well shewn by *Puffendorf*. Law of N. B. 2. C. 3. §. 5. And Aristot. Eth. ad Nicom. L. x. C. 8.

Reason dictates to them, that they should look upon that as their *Summum Bonum*, the ultimate End of all their Actions.

V. He goes on to object ‡, that “ if this be true (viz. that Moral Obligation is founded in private Happiness) then no Reason can be assigned for publick Spirit when there is no Command of God.” If this Writer had known any Reasons for it which were not founded upon a Prospect of Happiness in this Life or a Reward in the next, I should have been glad he would have favour’d us with some of them. For a Man to hazard his Life for the Good of his Country, is a noble and exalted Instance of Christian Heroism; because ’tis setting aside the Considerarion of a present less Evil, for the sake of obtaining a future greater Good; since he is well assured that his light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.|| But however truely great this would be upon such a Prospect; yet, if we set aside the Consideration of a future Reward, and all is supposed to be at an End when this perishing Scene is closed, I must insist upon it once more, that it would be Madness and Folly to part with one Grain of Happiness here. Whatever fine things may be said of the brave Spirits of the ancient Pagans, I must think, that such of them as gave up their Lives upon

‡ Reply to Sarp. p. 17.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 17.

a fantastical Notion of Honour, without any Hopes of a future Reward, made a very foolish Bargain: unless they thought the Disgrace and Obloquy of refusing to act as they did, would have made Life not worth the enjoying, if they had refused. *Praefat per virtutem e-mori, quam per Dederus vivere.* Better die gallantly than live in Disgrace, might often be their Maxim.

The Notions of the *Stoicks* indeed pretty well agreed with this Gentleman's; they mistook the Means for the End as he does, and ran into the Enthusiastic Notion (for such I must call it) of Virtue being a lovely Form, amiable in itself, and desirable without farther End. * *Tully's Offices are full of more sublime and generous Principles*, than the Principles of the New Testament, he must say, if he was to speak out†. Call them *sublime* and *generous*, or what you please, and call ours *grovelling Mean-spiritedness*, yet unless you can give a Reason for it (for Exclamations are not Reasons) you had better have said nothing‡. Every one knows, that *Tully* has carried his Notions much higher than any Man of Sense (except this Author) will be willing to follow him, as he constantly mistakes the Means for

* Reply to Suppl. p. 25.

† See *Hebrews xi.*

‡ "Tho' we could argue never so fairly, this Action is suitable to the Excellency and Dignity of Man, and therefore honest, and to be perform'd, yet this doth not furnish us with any clear or certain Knowledge, in which our Minds may rest safely, without farther Enquiry. *Puff. Law of N. B. 2. C. 3. §. 13.*

the

the End. Ask him why a Man ought to be grateful to his Benefactor, or suffer for the Good of his Country, he will give you this Reason, 'tis *honestum* or *decorum*, which (if you stop there) can be but poor Satisfaction to a rational Enquirer. *Tully* was a wise and a good Man; but he had contracted such strong Associations of Ideas in favour of Virtue, that in his Praises of it he stopt short of the true rational Foundation. *Epicurus*'s Notions were in that Respect much wiser, and more Philosophical than either *Zeno*'s or *Tully*'s. Temperance, Fortitude, Friendship, and the whole Circle of Virtues were, according to his Notions, all valuable, and what a wise Man would chuse to live up to; but they were only valuable, as tending towards some more remote End, as leading towards the *Summum Bonum*, which was ~~itself~~, *Private Happiness*. This Writer is a little unhappy in bringing in *Epicurus* as of his Opinion, unless he had a Mind to convince us, that he was as little acquainted with *Pagan* Philosophy, as with Christian Divinity. There is scarce another Sect but the *Epicurean*, but what are Favourers of his Opinion; and therefore it was very ill guess'd to fix upon *Epicurus* for saying || that *Ingratitude was odious in itself, and contrary to Nature*. His Friend *Tully* would have taught him better, if he had consulted his first Book *de Finibus*, where the *Epicurean* Philoso-

|| Reply to Suppl. p. 26.

phy is set forth at large, and at the best Advantage. To save him some Trouble, I shall transcribe a Passage or two into the Margin.†

Under this Article it may be proper to take Notice of what Mr. Chubb has offered in favour of a disinterested Benevolence. He produces such Reasons as he has for his Opinions, whereas the Author of the Reply won't vouchsafe to give us any. He begins † with *Pleasure is preferable to Pain*, or Happiness to Misery; Very well: Therefore *communicating Happiness is preferable to communicating Misery*. I ask, preferable to whom? To the Agent or Patient? To the latter, I confess; but how does it appear that it is to the former? Is it a Proof to say, that || 'tis kind, therefore commendable, therefore fit, therefore preferable, and thence to conclude that Benevolence (as distinct from Self-love) is a proper Principle of Action. The Question is, What can induce a Man to communicate Happiness to another rather than

† *Ne Iustitiam quidem recte quis dixerit per se ipsam optatorem, sed quia Iucunditatis vel plorium affectum*, which is spoke in the Person of Torquatus an Epicurean, I. 16.—He says the same of Friendship (which Eticarus had very high Notions of) and admirably well accounts for its being turned into a disinterested Affection by Habit.—*Iaque primus Congriffas Cogulatissimis Confuetudinibus instituendarum voluntates fieri propter Voluptatem. Cum autem Utus progrediens Familiaritatem efficerit, tum amorem effructescere tantum, ut, etiam si nulla sit Utilitas, ex amicitia tamen iussi amici propter scipios amentur*, I. 20.

The same Account we have in Diod. Laertius, Διὸς τὴν ἀδερφὴν τὸν ἀρετὰς δέν διπέπειται, καὶ διὰ διλα, Λεπτὸν τὸν Ιαπωνίου διὰ τὴν ὑγιειαν. Lib. x. p. 660.

‡ Reflect. p. 35: || Ibid. p. 41.

not?

not? What is the exciting Reason †? You must either assign one, or tell me 'tis preferable *in itself* as an *ultimate End*. And then the Pleasure of doing it will be the true Reason. Now this is recurring, to a Moral Sense, as Mr. Hutcheson has shewn ‡. But that *that* is acquired, and can be no *Criterion* of Morality, nor any certain or true Principle to act upon, I have shewn before, Chap. V.

Mr. Chubb goes on, and compares || *Benevolence* with *Selfishness*, and thinks “ a Man “ should deny himself the Enjoyment of a “ low Degree of Pleasure, or undergo a low “ Degree of Pain, to remove from another a “ violent Fit of the Gout or Stone, without “ any View of Pleasure or Advantage to himself, “ either in this World or the next. To which I answer, if. That *Selfishness* is a Word which ought not to be used in this Place, because in common Language it has always a bad Sense, and carries in its Idea something of Moral Oblliquity. I can no more commend *Selfishness* than Ingratitude, because its Signification excludes all *benevolent* Affections, which in the present System of things are highly valuable in every Man, as necessary to the Well-being

† “ The Tendency of an Action to the Happiness of one Agent, may excite him, but will not excite another Agent to concur, unless there appears the like Tendency to the Happiness of that other.” *Hutcheson’s Illustrat.* p. 221.

‡ *Ibid.* §. 1. || *Reflect.* p. 41.

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and Happiness of Mankind in general, and therefore of every individual in particular. *Self-Interest* || is another Word almost as bad as the former, as it seems to exclude all Concern for any other Beings whatsoever; whereas we maintain, that whilst we continue in this *social* State, Benevolence or disinterested Affection, is a proper Principle of Action; and how it comes to be so we have shewn before. I answer, 2dly. That setting aside the Consideration of a future Reward, either in this Life or the next, no single Reason can be given why one ought to suffer the least Degree of Pain, to remove from another the greatest. Nor does this Writer offer to give one; but only replies, † that “ kind Actions bespeak and “ shew themselves to be reasonable, and that “ in the Nature of the thing they do not ad-“ mit of being shewn to be so any other way.” That is, they are preferable *for their own sakes*, and to be desired as *ultimate Ends*, or for the sake of the Pleasures attending the very Actions themselves; which is again recurring to the *Moral Sense*, or else they are preferable, but no body knows how or why.

VI. 'Tis objected by Mr. Chubb †, that if “ *Selfishness* be the Ground and Foundation, “ the Rule and Measure of Right and Wrong,

¶ Used in the Reply to Suppl. p. 15, &c.
† Reflect. p. 42. † Ibid. p. 47.

" of Good and Evil,—then he that is the
 " most *selfish* with regard to this World, as he
 " is the most virtuous, so he will of Course
 " be the most pleasing and acceptable to his
 " Maker." I don't know any one that has
 commended *Selfishness* with regard to this World.
 † On the contrary we maintain, that 'tis fit
 and reasonable to postpone a less present Inter-
 est for the sake of a greater future one, we
 maintain that it behoves every one who lives
 in Society, not to confine his Affections to
 himself, nor to act upon a Principle of Self-
 love only, because this will in the Event pre-
 judge his real Interest. ‡ Nay we farther
 maintain, that a disinterested Benevolence is
 rational, commendable, and indeed the very
 thing which gives the Name or Character to
 virtuous Actions among Mankind. A Man is
 not call'd *virtuous* for taking care of his
 Health or Estate, but *prudent*: Virtue in a
 more confined Sense, only relating to the Be-

† " Virtue looks beyond this World, and rests in God alone.
 " It is submitting to present Restraints, and Self-denials, and
 " trusting in God only for our Recompence. *Sigl.* p. 11.

‡ " So certain it is that the *Psalms* tells us, that the *Fair* ²
 " the Lord is the Beginning of *World*; that is, it is the Foun-
 " dation of Virtue, and the very Root and Basis of all Obliga-
 " tion, And therefore this is the true Difference between a Fool
 " and a Knave: a Fool is he that does not proceed upon any
 " Principle of Interest at all; a Knave is he that does wrong
 " upon a Principle of Interest, but he does not take his whole
 " Interest together; and so at the Long-run is a Fool as well
 " as the other, tho' in his own Conscit he be wonderful wise.
Turier of the Laws of Nat. p. 56.

haviour of social Beings with respect to each other.* Nor is this in the least inconsistent with what was said before, of private Happiness being the ultimate End, and true Principle of Action. For as there are certain *Means* necessary to be observed, as leading towards this general *End*; so these Means are good and valuable, and therefore desir'd, prov'd, and hence by *Habit* lov'd; but the Object of Love is a real End, or desir'd for its own sake. Whosoever therefore considers Mankind as he ought, will see, that he best consults his own Happiness who studies that of the Publick,† and endeavours after the Esteem of Mankind: And if he has a due Sense of this, he must have a constant Disposition to promote the Good of others ; that is, he must desire and approve all Actions that tend towards it, and by that means must at length necessarily acquire an habitual Love for such Actions, and consequently for Mankind, without Reference or immediate View to any thing else. This is what we mean by disinterested Benevolence ; 'tis not necessary that the Agent should have no remote or distant View towards his own Happiness in the main ; "but

* See the *Preliminary Dissertation to King's Origin of Evil*,
P. 17.

† " The more rationally a Man loves himself, the more earnest he will be in endeavouring by good Turns to procure the Love of other Men." Puffendorf's Law of Nat. B. 2. C. 3. §. 16.

“ it is sufficiently disinterested, if it contemns
 “ all narrow, low, or sordid Views, and looks
 “ only at securing an eternal Interest in
 “ God.” *

This I think may be a sufficient Answer to half a dozen tedious Pages of Mr. Chubb's † against Selfishness. He is all along beating the Air, as he confounds our Doctrine with that of Hobbs; whereas 'tis as different from Hob-bism, as Goodness from Power. We are not for destroying, but on the contrary, for building it up, and supporting it upon its true and rational Foundation. And 'tis that Doctrine only which tends towards weakening and undermining it, that places it upon the unintelligible enthusiastic Footing of *Fitness in itself.*

'Tis a mean Artifice, which the Author of the Reply ‡ uses to bring an Odium upon his Adversary, by calling his Scheme of Morality, *the Morality of a Highway-man or Pick-pocket.* Whether he will bestow the same Compliment upon all the Worthies mentioned in the Eleventh to the Hebrews, he may consider. Or let him read these Words, *who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, &c.* and let him say, whether that was the Morality of such as he speaks of, or whether he has not let his Pen write *rash*

* Suppl. to the Treatise, &c. p. 15. † from p. 47 to 53.
 ‡ p. 26.

things.

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things. The Author of the Supplement*, makes the Love of God the Center in which all Virtues terminate, and constantly refers all Views of Interest to another Life, which is the proper Reason of Reward. Now, what Nonsense, as well as Profaneness, is it, to call a Morality centring in the Fear and Love of God, the Morality of a Highway-man or Pick-pocket?

I meet with no other Objections in these two Writers, than what I have either answered in this Chapter, or have been obviated by what I offered before in fixing and establishing our Scheme of Morality. I shall therefore dismiss this Point with observing of what Importance it is to Christianity to settle this Subject upon a right Footing, as any one may be convinc'd who observes what a material Difference there is betwixt the respective Parties in this Controversy, in some of the most important Christian Doctrines. And I may farther add, that 'tis easy to see what a pernicious Tendency the Scheme of independent Fitnesses is of, from what use has been made of it by a late Advocate for Deism.† His whole Book is built upon this Principle, that Duty and Obligation arises from the Natures and Relations of things, ||
“ which are so independent, that no Command can alter them, or make that fit which

* p. 11.

† Christianity as old as the Creat. || Ib. p. 31.
13

is *in itself* unfit," and consequently Man must always have the same Religion. This is a Consequence which I have Charity enough to believe, neither the *Author of the Reply*, nor Mr. Chubb were aware of. But I must own, I can't see how they will get off it if the Premisses be granted. Because what is once fit *in itself*, must be always fit; *Fitness in itself* not having Relation to any End, and not being alterable by any Change of Circumstances whatever. It now only remains, that I apply the Principles establish'd to (what first occasioned this Controversy) *the Nature and Obligation of positive Duties.*



C H A P. VII.

*Concerning the Nature and Obligation
of Positive Duties.*

This Point has been already so largely and so well handled in the *Nature, Obl. and Eff. of the Christian Sacraments*, and the *Supplement to that Treatise*, that little need be added to what has been said. I shall therefore only briefly lay down what I take to be the true State of the Case, and apply the Principles established to a Decision of this Controversy, and then proceed to answer such Objections as have been offered since the Publication of the *Supplement*.

All the Advocates for *moral* Duties, in opposition to *positive*, have constantly mistaken the true Point in question: They have either endeavour'd to prove, that *inward Virtue* is preferable to *external Performances*, or that the *Matter* of moral Duty is preferable to the *Matter* of positive Duty. Neither of which has ever been denied. But the true Question is this; Whether *moral* Duty in *positive* Instances be always inferior to *moral* Duty in *moral* Instances; or whether *sincere Obedience* to God in *positive* Instances, be not sometimes as valuable as *sincere Obedience* to God in *moral* Instances. This is the true State of the

Que-

Question. Now if all Obligation is founded on the Will of God (as I have shewn before) then all Duties, whether moral or positive, stand upon the same Basis, and our Observation of them must flow from the same Principle, *Obedience to his Will.* All Laws, both moral and positive, resolve into this Moral Law or Maxim, *what God commands, we are bound to obey:* And positive Duties have as immediate a Connection with *that Law*, as any moral Laws have, and so resolve into the same Principle, the same Source, the same Authority. Whatever God commands must therefore be obey'd, because he commands it: and no Action can have any thing morally good in it, any farther than it is perform'd out of such a Principle. The moral Character of Actions then will be denominated entirely from their Agreement or Disagreement to his Will: they will be just so far morally good, as they are conformable to it, and so far morally evil, as they are Deflections from it. If it be objected, that this confounds and destroys the Distinction betwixt the *moral* and *positive* Parts of Religion; I answer, That *Obedience* admits of no such Distinction. *Duties* indeed do; and by *moral* we mean, Duties enjoin'd by the Law of Nature, by *Positive*, such others as are only enjoin'd by the express Command of God: The former are permanent, as suited to Man's rational and social Nature, and therefore can only have an End with that rational and so-
cial

cial Nature: the latter changeable, as suited to that particular Nature and Condition, which Man is in when they are enjoyn'd him. Each of them are equally eternal and immutable, that is, neither of them is strictly and properly so, but only hypothetically: Or supposing Beings of such a Nature and Condition, certain Duties will be fitting for, and obligatory upon them. Moral Laws are fitted for Man as Man, positive Laws for Man, not as such, but as under certain Circumstances. This I think is manifest, upon supposition that the Author of the Laws be perfect in Wisdom and Goodness.

But as Man is a Subject capable of *both* Laws at the same Time, it may be enquired, what must be done when they come in Competition; I answer, Reason must be call'd in to shew us which is the Will of God in such a Case. If the positive Command be particular, there can be no doubt but it must be obey'd at all Hazards: If a Parent be commanded to sacrifice his Son, or one Nation to root out and destroy another, no Opinion of a contrary moral Obligation can be a sufficient Excuse for the Neglect of it. If the Command be general, not confin'd to Time or Place, 'tis to be consider'd what Stress is laid upon it, what Importance 'tis declared to be of, what is the Penalty annex'd to the Breach of it, what is the general End and Design of it; and all other Circumstances relating to it are to be duly weighed:

And

And from thence a Judgment is to be form'd, what is most probably the Will of God, when that interferes with a Moral Duty. If it should be said, 'tis absurd to suppose God should lay so great a Stress upon a positive as upon a Moral Duty. Let us turn to our Bibles and see, how the matter of Fact stands. We there find how severe a Penalty was annex'd to *Adam's* Transgression of one positive Command, how strictly God required Obedience to the ritual Law of the *Jews*; and how indispensably necessary Baptism is made to all who believe in Christ, and hope for Salvation in and through him. We have several Instances how much God preferr'd Obedience to his Injunctions, to any Pretence of honouring him with higher Honour in a different Way, or of doing what might be thought fit and right, if God had not interposed with his Command. *Saul's* reserving the *Amalekite's* Cattle for Sacrifice is a notorious Instance of God's Wrath against Disobedience to his positive Commands *; and *Abraham's* Readiness to sacrifice his Son, is as signal a one of the Excellency of Obedience ||. I must own I think Mr. *Chubb's* Inference very just, if his Principles be allow'd, that *Abraham* ought to be blamed for his Compliance in that Particular, since the Light of Nature might tell him, that it was contrary to the Re.

* 1 Sam. xv. 23.

|| Genes. xxii.

Iations and Fitnesse of things; as a Father's *sacrificing* his Son must be allow'd to be, unless all Morality be referred to the Will of God. In the Christian Dispensation *Baptism* is ordinarily necessary to Salvation; and therefore, no Pretences whatever of doing good to Mankind, or any thing else, can be a sufficient Excuse for neglecting it where it may be had. Prayer is a positive Institution †; yet no one Duty of Morality is more strictly enjoin'd, or more frequently insisted upon in the Gospel than that is. If it be said, that this is because of its Usefulness and natural good Tendency to keep up in the Minds of Men a just Sense of God and his Providence, I readily allow it, and can say the same of all positive Institutions of Religion, that they are not merely arbitrary (if by arbitrary be meant, instituted without some good Reason) but were appointed for some wise End and Purpose. What these Reasons are, is nothing to the present Enquiry, because the Reason of our Obedience is founded entirely on their being divine Appointments. This is strongly and clearly expressed by the Author of the Supplement, † whose Words I shall borrow in this Place.

“ Reasons of a Law are one thing, Reasons of
“ Obligation are another. A Law should not
“ want its Reasons, and yet 'tis the Law, and

[†] See Dr. Stilling's Use and Advantages of the Gosp. p. 36,
etc. [‡] p. 17.

“ not

" not those Reasons, that properly creates the
" Obligation. For the Law would oblige, tho'
" we knew nothing of these Reasons."]]

What little I have here said may, I think, be sufficient to shew, that the *Obligation* to positive Duties *as such*, is not a Jot less than the Obligation to moral *as such*; and that when they come in competition, sometimes one must give place, and sometimes the other, according to the different Circumstances attending them. And therefore I may here take notice, by the way, that it is a very false Representation of our Principles, when some give it out, that we prefer positive Duties *absolutely* to moral. It is a Calumny they are pleased to throw out upon the Author of the *Nat. and Oblig. of the Christian Sacr.* &c. imputing to him things which he has not said, because they cannot confute what he has. Of the same Kind is their other as false Assertion, that positive Duties are made the *End*, and moral the *Means*: When all that is asserted is, that moral Duties are *preparatory Qualifications* for the Sacraments; which amounts only to saying, that Men must *repent* first, and then be baptized, or receive the Holy Communion.

What I shall trouble the Reader farther with, shall be by way of Answer to such Objections as have not yet been taken notice of.

[See *Pugilati. Law of Nat.* B. 1. C. 6.

The Author of the *Reply to the Suppl.* seems to be stung, and put quite out of Humour with his Subject; I shall therefore leave him till he comes into Temper again. His Flouts and Abuses of his worthy and learned Adversary answer themselves; and for Arguments, if there be any, they were all answered before, as the meanest Reader must easily see.

There is another Gentleman who has wrote in the Spirit of Wrath, and with the Gall of Bitternes, what he calls † an answer to the *Nature and Obligation*, &c. 'Tis not worth while to make a formal Reply to a Pamphlet so full of Words and puerile Declamation, and so empty of Argument, which seems only designed to darken the Subject, puzzle the Cause, and perplex the Evidence. The Author of the Supplement has given us a Specimen of his Reasoning; and 'tis needless to trouble the Reader with any thing more on that Head. But because among his many personal Reflections on that excellent Writer, he accuses him of || gross Misrepresentations of Persons and Things, I shall just shew the Reader how well he supports his Charge in the Instance produc'd for that Purpose. In p. 10. he accuses him of misrepresenting Bingham, either ignorantly or designedly, in quoting his Authority for the

† the Comparative Excellence and Obligation of moral and positive Duties fully stated and consider'd.

|| Ibid. p. 4.

ancient Churches looking upon the *Eucharist* as a Conveyance of a general Pardon of Sins to every worthy Recipient. " Any one (says " this Writer) that reads *Bingham*, will see, " without a Comment, that he only speaks of " the *Eucharist*, as one Form that was made " use of among many others of Church-abso- " lution." Now let *Bingham* speak for himself ||: His Words are,— " The Stewards of " Christ's Mysteries were always supposed to " have the ministerial Power of conveying " Remission of Sins to Men, by the Admini- " stration of *Baptism*." And of the *Eucharist* he says, p. 181.— " This had some Relation " to penitential Discipline, but did not *solely* " belong to it: for it was given to all bapti- " zed Persons, who never fell under penitential " Discipline, as well as to those who lapsed, " and were restored to Communion again. " And in both Respects it was called the " τέλεσις the Perfection or Consummation of " a Christian." And now who can say, that this Writer does not either want a Comment to explain *Bingham*, or Honesty to represent him truly.

Mr. *Chubb* has given the Arguments in favour of moral above positive Duties, a Turn somewhat different from what was done before I shall therefore consider the Strength of what

he has offer'd, and then take Leave of Him and the Controversy, 'till something more considerable appears on that Side the Question.

I. 'Tis objected by him, || that "the Ground or Reason of our Obedience to positive Laws ought to be, not because they are commanded, but because we would obtain the *End* which our wise and good Lawgiver has appointed these as Means to lead us to." To which I answer That the Groud of our Obligation is not indeed a mere Command as such, but the Command of a Being on whom we can safely rely and depend, as one who both knows what is good for us, and will command us nothing else. The particular or inferior *End* (as distinguished from the ultimate *End*, *private Happiness*) is no Ground or Reason of our Obedience; any more than the particular Reason of a Civil Law is the Ground of a Subject's Obedience to it. He may happen not to know the Reasons the Law is founded upon, or may not be a competent Judge of them; yet a Reason for Obedience he will always see, so long as he is sensible of the Advantages of living in a civil Government. 'Tis not therefore necessary (as this Writer contends) that the End to which positive Duties are directed should be known, so long as there is an implicit Reliance on the Wisdom and Goodness of the Law-

|| Reflection on mor. and pol. Duties, p. 60.

giver, Obedience to whom as such, is good, and rewardable. Nor does it follow from thence, that the mere outward Act of eating Bread and drinking Wine in the Lord's Supper, is all that a Christian need do to purchase the Benefits annex'd to that Sacrament; but the eating Bread, and drinking Wine in the Manner 'tis commanded, that is, with that Piety and Devotion, those good Dispositions and internal Acts of the Mind, which are required to accompany the outward Act.

II. Mr. Chubb || compares moral and positive Duties together, in three different Respects, 1st. He says, " Moral Duties have a " real and intrinsick Worth and Goodness in " themselves, whereas positive Duties are good " and valuable only relatively, as Means to an " End." I answer, That nothing has a real intrinsick [natural] Goodness in itself, except Happiness; and all Duties, whether moral or positive, are only valuable as Means leading towards that ultimate End. In that Respect therefore they stand upon the same Footing. 2dly. He gives the Preference to moral above positive Duties, " as the former make the A- " gent more valuable and Praise-worthy than " the latter †." What this *Valuableness in it- self* means (as distinguished from Valuableness in the Sight of God) I don't well apprehend. Unless it has relation to an End, it carries the

|| Reflec p .65.

† Ibid. p .66.

saine Absurdity with it, as *Fitness in itself*. If it relates to Men, it must mean Usefulness or Beneficialness to Mankind; and in this respect I say, positive Duties may in some Cases make the Agent more valuable than Moral; as they are necessary to preserve a sense of Religion in Mens Minds, and guard that fundamental Principle of Obedience to the Deity, which only can recommend them to his Favour. But admitting that a Man may be more serviceable to Mankind in some particular Cases, by neglecting a positive Duty for the sake of a moral one; yet I shall deny his third Particular \parallel , viz. that "the Practice of Moral Duties render us more pleasing and acceptable to God." The Author judges here only from the beneficial Tendency of Actions; but it is not true, that he is always the most valuable in the Sight of God, who is most useful to Men. If a Man, for instance, spurr'd on by Ambition and Desire of Praise among Men, redeems the Captive, or relieves the Indigent, he has his Reward; God values not such Services. Or, if a poor Widow casts two Mites into the Treasury, out of a just Sense of Duty and Obedience to God; she does, in the Sight of God, cast in more than those who cast in much out of no such Principle. 'Tis Faith in God, a firm Trust and Dependence on him, that are the Qualities which render a Man valuable in his Sight.

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This I think is the Chief of what Mr. *Chubb* offers in Defence of the Preferableness of moral Duties to positive; I have spoke to them but briefly, having no mind to repeat what has been said so well before in the *Nature and Obligation of the Sacraments*, &c.

Mr. *Chubb*, in the Close of his Pamphlet, expresses his Fears, that placing so much Value on positive Duties will be sending us back to Popery. But if he will please to distinguish between the Institutions of our Lord, and the Inventions of Men, between the *Opus Operatum* or external A&t, and the Performance of them with those pious, devout, and good Dispositions, which we suppose to be requisite, he may justly quit his Fears, and come over to our Side. And if he does but observe the Coldness with which some Men receive Christianity now-a-days, and the little Respect with which the Sacraments are treated, he may then see a good Reason for standing up for positive Institutions, and vindicating their Honour; lest a Coldness towards them should by Degrees turn into a total Neglect and Contempt of them. And what the Consequence of that would be, every one must be sensible who has but the least Apprehensions of the Folly and Misery of Deism, and of the Use, Advantages, and Excellency of the Christian Religion.

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Johnson, Thomas
An essay on moral
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